



## **S. H. Merwin & Sons, Inc.**

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**To: DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
901 P STREET, P.O. BOX 942836  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-6424

**Re: Scoping for the ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT STATEMENT  
FOR THE BAY DELTA CONSERVATION PLAN**

April 30, 2008

Greetings,

I am writing to offer my input to the EIR process that the proposed BDCP has initiated. My comments are specifically directed to the four Draft Conservation Strategy Options roughly outlined in the presentation to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee Hearing on the Governor's Delta Actions by Lester A. Snow, Director, Department of Water Resources March 11, 2008 concurrent with the initiation of the EIR process.

As a fifth generation California farmer (third generation Delta farmer), in total and grave seriousness, I urge you to include at the top of the protected species list the California Delta Farmer. Agriculture has coexisted within the Delta environment since the gold rush, and all four options proposed as a Conservation Strategy appear to significantly threaten if not completely exterminate this vital species. I was under the impression that the Delta Protection Act was created in large measure to protect Delta Agriculture. What happened to that?

I farm about 2100 acres in the Clarksburg area and one of the primary crops that I grow is alfalfa for dairy hay. My 1000 acres of alfalfa enables dairies to produce enough milk to supply 61000 people per year. My neighbor grows 1000 ac. of tomatoes, which supply about 1.5 million people per year. Clarksburg produces virtually the entire world's supply of dichondra seed. We are the tip of the iceberg. Yolo County is the fifth largest agricultural county in the leading agricultural state in the nation. Even though just 5% of Yolo County farmland in lies in the Delta, it generates more than 20% of that county's agricultural revenue. Not only are we helping to feed people, but we also pay property taxes and assessments on that farmland, sales tax on all inputs, and personal and corporate income taxes too. We hire services and buy supplies from companies that help us fertilize, protect, harvest, and haul our crops. The people that help us grow our crops live on our farms, many with their families. These farms are what make the Delta communities function. Eliminate us and the communities wither.

We are environmental stewards of our land and water. We would be foolish not to be, the land provides our livelihood, and the water is our lifeblood. We are extremely careful about how we use our water and we participate in a watershed coalition which monitors and helps improve our use of water. In my lifetime I have seen a tremendous increase in the diversity of wildlife on my farm. One day last fall I counted more than 150 Swainson's Hawks hunting in one harvested wheat field that we were disking.

The Delta is a vital economic engine and a beautiful region to have in the heart of California. All of the distinct and unique towns that exist in the Delta came into existence to support agriculture. Eliminate agriculture to restore native habitat, and you will create the following problems adjacent to and upwind from metropolitan areas: no property tax revenue, no economic production, increased mosquito pressure (West Nile, bird flu, Malaria, etc.) and other insect pressures (the Minute Pirate Bug has become particularly obnoxious to our quality of life in last few years), putrid odors borne on the cooling Delta breeze that arise from lowlands as they dry out seasonally. I know exactly what you have to look forward to; I live two hundred yards from the Yolo Bypass, and downwind from government owned "managed" wetlands.

Because of our location we benefit from relatively inexpensive and readily available water. I find it inconceivable that it would be more beneficial to the state to convert my ranch to tules in order to allow a farm 100 miles from here to exist with much more expensive imported water, or to allow even 100 more houses to be built somewhere.

The problem California is faced with is not that the Delta is broken and needs to be altered; the true problem is that we have too many people in this state, living mostly in areas that lack the local water they need (and should have been required to prove they had before the land was developed). Rather than address that inconvenient truth, California plows blindly ahead, seeking ways to accommodate ever more people in inappropriate places, while we in the Delta would be forced from our homes and livelihoods to better serve the thirsty hordes that do not have enough water where they chose to develop and live.

California does indeed have a serious problem, but it is far better to address the true issue: overpopulation, rather than chasing the symptoms.

Thank you for your time,

Jeff Merwin  
President  
S.H. Merwin & Sons, Inc.